

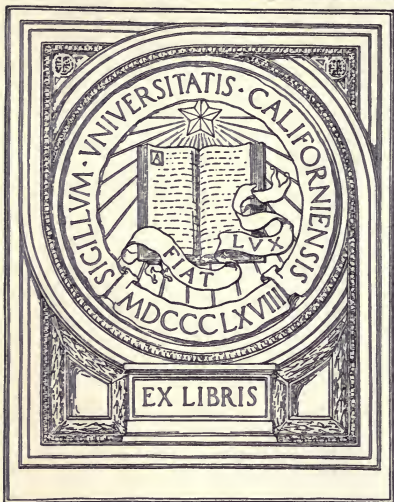
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Alex Goodwin's Deed

By

Mabel Putnam

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
AT LOS ANGELES



ROBERT ERNEST COWAN

DC

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ALEX GOODWIN'S DEED.

CHAPTER I.

"SISTER KATE, what makes the stars look at each other? Are they *really* winking, or does the light keep dancing on their faces? What is it that makes them look so funny and gay?"

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The little curly head was leaning on Miss Alden's knee, and the bright blue eyes were gazing upward at the sky, where myriads of stars were blinking and tossing smiles and glances down at little Alex Goodwin, as he sat in his bedroom at the Florence Hospital. Poor little boy! He might sit all day long by the sunny window and watch with beating heart and dancing eyes the children in the street below, playing ball and climbing trees, catching innocent butterflies that lighted on the grasses by the pavement, and chasing each other in a game of tag; but he could not join them—no. For had not that cruel limb broken and let him fall? And had he not

been carried by an unknown man to this hospital, where he must stay for weeks to come? Had not papa written that his little boy must try and bear it like a man,—and would he not do *anything* for papa?

But now the children of the village were all at home, as it was nearly bedtime, and Alex had no inclination to go down to the street and play, but sat with lips apart and wide-open eyes, wondering about the stars, and thinking he could almost see those funny little pygmies hopping about—I mean those little creatures Miss Alden had been telling him were stationed in the sky and lived among the stars. He wondered if those stars had faces imprinted on their lands; if the little lakes were eyes, and if the ranges of mountains were the noses. He wondered all sorts of queer things, and asked all sorts of funny questions. But to Miss Alden, who sat stroking his pretty golden locks, it was a real pleasure to answer all his inquiries. Miss Alden was fond of children generally, and of this one particularly. And, in turn, Alex loved Miss Alden.

“You are the lady that bound my arm and begged those children in the hall to keep still, so my head would stop aching, aren’t you, Miss Alden? And didn’t you pick some flowers for me and bring some nice broth for me to drink

as soon as I came to?" asked Alex, the second morning after his arrival at the hospital.

"Yes," answered Miss Alden, her eyes filling with tears, as she thought of the suffering her little charge had endured, and how pitiful it was to see him lying on his pillow, with a tear-stained face and disheveled locks; but those days were past, and now she must try and brighten his stay as best she could. He was better now, and consequently more restless, as the longing to join in the games of the village children possessed him. So she told him stories, and sang to him all the funny little songs she had learned for the benefit of the children in the building. To-night she had been entertaining him for about an hour, and now he was contented to sit quiet and thoughtful, still watching the stars.

Perhaps you will be surprised that Alex called Miss Alden "Sister Kate," but this is the way it came about: Alex had lived in New York all his life-time, and had often heard his mother speak of the beautiful work being done by the Episcopal Sisterhood. Those kind women always wore white caps and aprons while they were nursing sick people, and were always known to others as Sister Jane, or Sister Mary, or Sister—well, whatever the name might be. So when Alex Goodwin was carried to the Florence Hos-

pital, and saw so many women hurrying about, all wearing little white caps and long white aprons, he thought immediately of those Sisters in New York; and he had not been an inmate of the house three days, before he asked Miss Alden to let him call her "Sister." Of course, he explained why he wished to do so, and of course lovely Miss Alden *had* to tell him that her name was Kate, even if she did just hate that name. You know ladies generally dislike their own names. So, after that, she was always "Sister Kate" to Alex.

On this special evening the words "Sister Kate" had a very pathetic sound, at least to Miss Alden; for she was thinking of a dear little brother she once had, who had always called her that. The little brother looked something like Alex, and he had died years ago. She felt very sad about it; for little Jamie had been her special favorite, and his death was a terrible blow.

Of course, Alex did not know anything concerning Sister Kate's brother; and for that reason he often wondered at the big tears starting from his nurse's eyes.

"Sister Kate," he said at last, "I am so tired, I should like to go to bed. That was a fine story you told about the pygmies in the sky; but I am

so sleepy I can't listen to any more. Please light my lamp and read my verse."

So saying, he turned from the window, and waited for Miss Alden to prepare the room for the night. It was not long before Sister Kate tucked Alex in his little bed, and left him to wander alone in the Land of Nod.



CHAPTER II.

AS most of us like to know "how people look," when we read a story, I will try to tell you more about Alex and his father.

Mr. Goodwin was a handsome young man, with dark brown eyes and curly black hair. Having a straight, athletic figure, and being tall, he was always noticed by everybody; and, what was better than all this, he had one of the kindest hearts in the world, and a smile that seemed to make you feel perfectly happy when in his company. He was very fond of children, and always had some merry tale to relate. In consequence, all the little folks were his friends, and those whom Alex knew always received a pleasant welcome at the Goodwins' home in New York city.

Alex, as I have said, had great blue eyes and light curly hair; he was a very nice-looking boy and had inherited his mother's sympathetic disposition and his father's love for fun. Alex had always been very happy in his home until six months before, when his beautiful mother had died and left the poor little boy to the care of an ancient aunt, who came to New York especially

for the purpose of caring for her nephew's home on Fifth Avenue. After his mother's death, Alex could not feel as happy and contented as he had been before; for there was no kind mother to go to when he was in trouble, no one to read him lovely stories in the evening after dinner, and no one to ride with in the Park. He did not much care for his Aunt Hilda, who was in truth his father's aunt—an old lady with snowy hair and a kindly disposition, but unsuited to care for children. However, she was in the house, and there was no getting away from her, unless he should go on a visit to his grandmother, whom he loved very dearly.

One evening as Alex and his father sat by the open fireplace talking of the happenings of the day (Aunt Hilda had gone to her room, so they were alone), Mr. Goodwin turned suddenly and lifted Alex to his knee.

"Papa has something to ask his little boy," said he. Alex put one hand on his father's shoulder, and with the other stroked the curly ends of the dark brown hair. Mr. Goodwin seemed not to mind this at all and smiled at his little son, asking what the boy would like most to do.

"Well, papa, I've tried and tried to like Aunt Hilda, but she's so old and kind of poky, I just can't, that's all. I do wish you were home in

the day-time, so that everything would be pleasant and nice, and we could ride in the Park together. That's what I would like most."

"Well, son, I wish I could. It makes me feel sad to see you so lonesome. But how could the bank get on without papa? And how could my little boy have a pony to ride, and plenty of nice books to read, if papa did not earn the money? Now, Allie boy, how would you like to make a nice visit to grandma, out West?"

"But you couldn't go, could you, papa?"

"No dear, I couldn't go to stay; but I would take you there and go for you again in a couple of months. You know grandma is so fond of you, and has written so often to me lately, asking for you to come."

Alex began to look very thoughtful, and finally said: "Could I take Jackson B, papa?" (Jackson B was his pony's name.)

"Why, my dear, grandma has a nice little saddle-horse for Harry to ride, and you could use him always."

"Well then, I think I shall have a good time. Yes, I will go; but what about my school?"

Here Mr. Goodwin looked rather troubled, for, truth to tell, he feared that a few months' vacation might prove quite a setback to Alex, and he had been hopeful that Alex would finish the

term without interruption. However, he stroked the boy's sunny curls, and answered :

"Well, I think that if my boy had such a good, jolly vacation, he would grow so much stronger that he would be willing to come back for the fall term, and work harder than ever with his books. Eh, Alex?"

Mr. Goodwin, however, had no intention of working the boy too hard; for he had been not a little worried about Alex, ever since his mother's death. He had noticed how downhearted the child seemed to be, and also that he had lost his appetite.

So it was arranged that Alex should go West to visit the dear old grandmother in her home at Maplewood, a pretty town between two sloping hills. Its walks and gardens were strewn with lovely shade-trees, making as pretty a sight as one could wish in early spring, just as the leaves were coming out. And what was most thought of by the young people—a charming stream where trout would soon be plentiful. Accordingly, Alex left his New York home, and one sunny spring day saw him and his father aboard the west-bound train. They were given an enthusiastic welcome by Grandma Goodwin, who was extremely fond of her handsome son, and just as fond of his little boy.

Mr. Goodwin remained a day or two in Maplewood, and then felt compelled to return to business. So Alex was left to enjoy himself as best he could in the quiet little town. And indeed he soon became acquainted with the children of the place, and made himself as much at home as any of them. Such fine morning rides as he had on old Charley the horse, taking him out often as early as half-past five, and not returning until breakfast-time.

Grandma Goodwin had taken a little boy to live with her and run errands. His mother and father had both died when he was a baby, and since then he had been tossed about from post to pillar, until Mrs. Goodwin had sent for him. He was very happy now and went to school every day. Upon being dismissed from school, he would go directly home, and if there were any chores to be done, away he would fly to perform his duties. Then he would harness old Charley and ride to the postoffice, the news-stand, and any other place "grandma" might send him. Harry was a very systematic little fellow; and because he was so quick about everything, he always had plenty of time for play. So you may imagine that when Alex came, grandma's house was the scene of many a jollification.

"Well, I declare I never did see such a jolly

old lady!" Harry used to tell Alex, as the boys would be unharnessing Charley and giving him his supper. At this remark, Alex would give Charley an emphatic slap, and say, "You bet!" in such a hearty manner as to show that he thought not many boys had such a fine grandmother.

Many a time during the summer, a party of four or five boys strolled into grandma's little garden, each with a string of fish caught up the stream. As soon as she heard their voices, up would go the little sitting-room window, and every cap would be raised, as the smiling face of grandma greeted them, and the pleasant voice said, "Come in, boys. We are going to have a good supper to-night, and I wish you to come in and make me happy." Then the window would be closed and grandma would bustle about, saying to herself, "Six; well, I think we can manage it, if the table *is* small. Jim can sit here, and Carl here, and—"

"Sure, ma'am, and is them boys acomin' to eat up me vittles?" would be heard from the slide in the pantry, and there would be poor old Bridget, arms akimbo, waiting to hear the latest from Mrs. Goodwin.

"Yes, Bridget; arrange places for six, and bring up some of the jelly from the cellar. Give us

plenty of strawberries and cream, and make some chocolate for us instead of tea; and *don't* forget the finger-bowls." For if there were one thing on earth which Grandma Goodwin doted on, it was her one dozen cut-glass finger-bowls, with a set of doilies, which young Mrs. Goodwin had sent her four Christmases ago. "And boys do need finger-bowls, goodness knows," she would say, by way of excuse for placing her very best before a set of fly-away boys.

So time passed on, till one day as Alex was climbing a cherry-tree in Frank Bayne's orchard, he fell and broke his arm. The fall stunned him so that he knew nothing more until he opened his eyes and found himself on a little cot in the Florence Hospital. This was a very pretty, quiet place, just on the outskirts of the town, and as Frank Bayne's orchard was only across the lane, this was certainly the nearest place Alex could be taken.

The Florence Hospital was supported by a charitable company of ladies, one of whom had erected the building and named it Florence, in memory of her daughter, who had died in a hospital away from home.

As you may imagine, Grandma Goodwin was overwhelmed with anxiety when told the news of

the accident, and hastened towards the hospital, her first impulse being to take the child home immediately; but when she was taken to his room and found him so well situated and receiving every attention from doctors and nurses, and found also that he had been placed in one of the prettiest single rooms of the building, she concluded it would be better to leave him in care of the hospital people. The doctor said it would be too much for him to be taken away from there just then. He was unconscious when grandma arrived, and she was terribly frightened; but the doctors comforted her as much as possible, and assured her that the boy would improve as soon as he became conscious. She waited until Alex opened his eyes and looked about him, and then felt assured that he would soon be better.



CHAPTER III.

WE will not follow Alex through all his weeks of sickness. Of course, Grandma Goodwin wrote immediately to New York, but did not telegraph, fearing to alarm her son; and as Alex was comfortably settled in his little room, she did not think it best that his father should come and take him away. So Mr. Goodwin remained in New York, very much disturbed though hopeful for Alex. The little boy progressed nicely, and was soon able to be out on the veranda, with the poor arm in a sling. He was beginning to think of fun and horseback rides again, when one day a sickening feeling crept over him, and he refused to eat. This caused some alarm in the hospital, as a dangerous fever was prevalent in the town, and the managers of the hospital never allowed persons suffering from contagious diseases to enter the building. But Alex was already there, and he could not be sent away. The next morning the doctors visited him early, and discovered to their alarm that he had in some way contracted the fever, and was in a fair way to be a very sick little boy. He was at once removed to a large room in one end of the building, away

from the other patients, and given every care. Grandma Goodwin was immediately summoned, and the case explained. Now, indeed, was the poor woman truly alarmed.

"Oh, dear," said she, "why didn't I write for his father to come anyway? What shall I do? I know he will die, with a broken arm and the fever, too!" And the dear old lady actually sobbed in her grief.

Mr. Goodwin was immediately telegraphed, but alas! when the message reached New York, he was traveling, nobody knew where, in Europe, on a hurried trip to St. Petersburg. Just two days previous, his firm had received a cablegram announcing his arrival in Liverpool; and when he had left that place, or which way he would go, they did not know; so the best thing to do was to send a message to St. Petersburg direct, and let it await his arrival there.

Before many days had passed, Grandma Goodwin received word from St. Petersburg that her son would soon be upon his way to New York, and would then hasten westward. In truth, Mr. Goodwin was completely beside himself when he received the telegram, but thought Alex must be alive, else they would have sent another message. However, he determined to leave the following evening on the train for Berlin.

Another week saw Mr. Goodwin on the deep Atlantic, and soon he was in New York. Then, taking the earliest train for Chicago, he tried to satisfy himself that everything would turn out right, as it generally did for him, in his busy, whirling, business life.

One evening Grandma Goodwin was sitting under the light of a pretty student lamp, trying very hard to interest herself in a book of sonnets; but somehow she couldn't help thinking of Alex and wondering how soon her dear son would come to them from New York. To be sure, Alex was progressing finely now, but he was very anxious to see his kind and indulgent father.

There was a ring at the front door, and Bridget soon came and threw the sitting-room door open, announcing, "A gentleman to see ye, mum." And on the threshold stood Mr. Goodwin. Of course grandma was overjoyed, and of course they sat up till nearly morning, talking about what had happened, what they intended doing, and so on.

The next morning they both went to the hospital, as soon as breakfast was over, and the first person they met as they neared the building was Sister Kate. She was picking a few flowers for Alex, she said, and was perfectly delighted to

know that at last Alex would be happy, because his father had come. Sister Kate had to tell Alex that a very dear friend wished to see him; and, of course, Alex guessed "Papa," and was wild with delight when Mr. Goodwin entered the room.

Well, they talked and talked, until the nurse saw that Alex was growing excited; and just then the doctor put his head in the door and said,

"It is too bad; but I am afraid to let you people talk any more. This little boy is too happy to rest well. Eh, Alex?" And he turned to the child, who said, imploringly,

"Oh, please let him stay. He is telling me all about my pony, Jackson B, and also about all the people I know in the East."

But Dr. Hamilton stood firm, and raised his eyebrows at Mr. Goodwin, who rose immediately and kissed his son good-bye, promising to return again before supper-time.



CHAPTER IV.

“**S**AY, what’s yer name?” Alex was on the veranda for an airing, and upon hearing the voice, turned in the direction whence it came; but he could see no one.

“Say! Hello, Bub! How old are you?” Again that same voice called him, and he looked for some one. At last a little bunch of leaves seemed moving wildly about over near the lattice, and Alex looked harder at it than before; then said,

“Is anybody there?”

“Yep; I’m here. Can’t yer see me? I’m hid behind these vines. Can’t yer see this here twig wigglin’ at yer?”

“Oh, yes, I see now. You are standing on the ground, aren’t you?”

“Yep. Jes’ come out to play hoss an’ have a run. This is my switch—see? I stuck it through the lattice, an’ thought mebbe you’d look around. Say, what makes yer sit there in that big chair? Yer sick? Come ahead down an’ have some fun.”

Then the figure moved away from the lattice, and Alex could see him through the vines walking slowly to the front steps of the veranda, where he stopped again, and looked up at Alex.

"Say, I'll bet yer ain't bin no sicker'n I was."

"Why, how sick were you?" said Alex. "Did you have your arm broken and then have a fever?"

"Nup. But I had er terrible lip on me—er hair lip; gut it now—see? An' then I mashed them fingers—them three, right there. An' I tell yer, kid, it hurt."

"Yes, it must have been dreadful. Come up here and tell me about it," said Alex.

"You know my name? No, I bet yer don't. My name is Johnny Wells—Johnny Wells. ~~Yep~~, that's my name. What's yourn?"

"My name is Alexander Hammond Goodwin."

"Whew, what a buster! Say, what yer have such a name as that for? Now, does every fellow what knows you say, 'Hello, Alexander What-
yer-may-callum!'? Nup, I bet they don't." And he emphasized his remark with a decided whack of his little willow switch down on the veranda floor.

"No," laughed the other; "they call me Alex for short. My father likes that better."

"Oh, you got a dad? Say, it must be great fun to have a dad. Say, I bet yer I've worked more than you have. What'll you bet?"

"Oh, I can't bet, because I don't know what you ever did. I never work except at my studies;

only sometimes I unsaddle Jackson B, when the stableman is very busy."

"Jackson B? Who's that—a horse?" And the little fellow's mouth opened as wide as his eyes.

"Yes; Jackson B is my pony, and—"

Oh, you got a pony? I bet yer can't ride no better'n I can. I rode a circus horse once when they was in Chicago, and the man said I rode great. I bet yer that there horse was bigger'n your pony."

"Why, have you been to Chicago?"

"Ben to Chicago! What yer take me for? Reg'lar sissy? Er course I've ben to Chicago. My biz is in Chicago."

"Your business! What business do you have?"

"I got a shoe-black place on a corner. Me and my chum makes mun great. I bet yer I can black boots better than you can—I bet yer! Say, when you black boots do you take one brush at a time like this yere? Kinder slow like—see? Pooh! we fellers takes them so-fashion—go like lightnin'—see?"

"I never black my shoes—anyway, only once in a while."

"Say, I bet yer I'm older than you. What'll yer bet? I bet yer eight years old. How old 'll yer bet I am? Well, sir, I'm eleven, I am. My chum he's seventeen; so he does the biz all alone

now. I help like anything when I'm there. I bet yer I do as much work as him. He says I'm a dandy shiner."

"I don't see how you ever got here, if you live in Chicago."

"Oh, I was sick, and a man I uster shine for he told me to come along home with him one night, 'cause his wife wanted to see me. I didn't know what in thunder his wife wanted er me, but I went; and she says to me, 'Well, yer sick, ain't yer?' And I says, 'Yes, I've been sick for a week. My lip hurts me sometimes, too, but 'tain't no good acryin' about it. I ain't no sissy.' 'Well,' says she, 'yer must come with me to the country way off'—and then she told me all about this yere place. Well, at last I give in, and here I am." With this the child arose, stretched himself out like a young animal, pushed his little torn cap back, scratched his head a little, looked thoughtful for a moment, and then leaning against a pillar of the awning, he slapped his thigh, and said:

"Well, kid, I tell yer what, this yere is a pretty dandy place when a feller is sick; but when he's well he doesn't want to stay in it long. See? I'm goin' back to Chicago next week."

Alex was growing so much stronger now that he could take little walks every day; so that

afternoon when his father called they went for a little stroll across the green lawns, and under the shade-trees that made such pretty arbors with their graceful branches.

"Papa, do you know what I'd rather do than anything else in the world? I'd like to build a great big house for sick children—a regular hospital, only nice and pleasant, with some of those nice lady nurses to take care of the poor children. Papa, I used to be terribly afraid of a hospital, but now I'm not a bit scared. Why, it is just as nice as home when you are sick, if you have such a nice lady as Sister Kate to take care of you. Really, papa, I just like Sister Kate awfully much. Papa, wouldn't she make a fine head nurse for a children's hospital?" And Alex skipped merrily on, one hand locked in his father's, and the other catching at leaves and flowers, twigs and butterflies as he went along.

Mr. Goodwin seemed in a gay mood also, and he whistled "Sweet Peggy" with as much animation as a boy. He and Alex chatted and laughed, talking over their plans for the future, and enjoying each other's company more than either could express. After a while, Alex said,

"Now, papa, I am so much better, the doctor lets me eat nice, big meals. You see, I am going away so soon, there's something I should

like to do very much. I should like—" then a pause.

"Well," said Mr. Goodwin, "what would you like?"

"Well, maybe you won't like it; but I should like to give a good-bye dinner to my friends here."

Mr. Goodwin laughed.

"You don't know what I mean, papa," said Alex, looking injured. "I mean a dinner for all the children here. They have been so kind to me. You see, Tom has been awfully good, and loaned me all of his books for Sister Kate to read to me. And that little girl with red hair—she's terribly homely, and she's got an awful name—Maggie O'Toole; but really, papa, she's gone down that lane every day on her crutches, and picked some of those wild flowers for my room. Then there's Johnny Wells—he's a funny fellow."

"Yes? What color is *his* hair?" said Mr. Goodwin, evidently amused.

"Oh, his hair's kind of common-looking—brownish. But he talks so funny! He must be poor. Oh, how dreadful it must be to feel poor! Just think! He blacks boots in Chicago, and he calls that his 'biz.' Isn't that funny? Oh, papa, what makes you look that way? Papa, don't

cry! What's the matter, papa? Don't you want me to talk about Johnny?"

"Yes, my son, talk about Johnny all you please. I'm not sick,—not crying, either, only this confounded sun shines in my eyes so, it makes them hurt, and look kind of wet, I suppose." And as he said this, Mr. Goodwin gave his hat a decided jerk down over his eyes, and, when Alex was not looking, brushed a tear or two away.

By this time, they had nearly reached the hospital, on their return. Mr. Goodwin accompanied Alex to his room, and remained there, telling him stories, and showing him little pocket-maps he had brought home from Europe. Finally, the bell for supper rang, and Mr. Goodwin rose; then, pressing one fond kiss on Alex's rosy lips, took his departure for grandma's cosy little home.



CHAPTER V.

M R. GOODWIN walked slowly down the shady path, stepping only to pluck a sweet white rose-bud for his buttonhole; then, emerging into the sunlight, pulled his hat further down over his eyes, quickened his pace, and in a short time arrived at the vine-clad house of his mother.

"Well?" said Grandma Goodwin, looking at him over her spectacles, as she gave a final pull at the needle that wouldn't come through the cloth.

"Well, the little boy is in high spirits, and took a long walk with me. He is possessed with the idea of giving a farewell dinner to his 'friends,' as he calls them,—the little children who have treated him so kindly."

"Well, did you ever see such a child? And how can he give a dinner to his friends in such a place as the hospital? Bless his heart! Are you going to let him do it? Why, it will make them all sick, won't it?"

"Oh, no, I think not. You see, he might give them a nice little treat in his room, and not have anything rich, either. The fact is, I never thought of such a thing, till he put it into my head; but

on the way home, just now, I have been thinking it over, and don't see why it should not be a feasible plan. At any rate, I intend to ask Dr. Hamilton about it, and if he gives his consent, we can easily arrange for a little supper. I declare, it makes my heart ache when I see those poor little charity patients there, being treated for lameness, deafness, or some other terrible affliction. I can't help wondering what sort of homes they are going back to, as soon as they are cured. Just think, mother, how horrible if Alex were one of them!"

"And for that reason, John dear, we ought to be especially thankful that his father has enough of this world's goods to make him happy, and keep him in a lovely home."



CHAPTER VI.

“**N**OW it's my turn. Let me peek this time. Come on.” Then, in a suppressed tone, came the words, “Oh, say! I bet yer that there stuff at this end the table is jelly, I bet yer! Yes, sir; and it's kinder reddish. O-o! yer see them flowers all roun'? And them pretty dishes? Say, it's great, ain't it? Come on, Mag; it's your turn now. Jes' look right through this way—” and Johnny once more squinted his left eye, and, with hands on his knees, bent down to show Maggie how to look through the key-hole.

They were very happy, these poor little folks, to be invited to a dinner party, given by “that rich kid, Alex.” For, of course, Mr. Goodwin agreed to let Alex have his way, and after considerable argument, the old physician at the Florence consented to have a plain dinner given to those children whose stomachs were able to digest “an ox,” as he somewhat eloquently stated.

Now, dinner parties were unheard-of things at hospitals, and the old doctor solemnly declared there should never be another one—never! But he looked in at the dining-room every time he passed through the hall, and as soon as his back

was turned the nurses would look queer looks at each other and go on arranging the viands in the most tempting style.

At last five o'clock arrived, and the door of Alex's bedroom was opened, while Mr. Goodwin and his son stepped out to walk down the hall and meet their guests in the sitting-room. But, bless your soul, they hardly stepped into the hall, when they encountered three of their "guests" awaiting them, the foremost one being Johnny Wells, who, with eyes ablaze with anticipation, and a rosy, upturned face, inquired, "Is it time, kid? I thought it was, buccuz we ben er waitin' nearly ha'fer nour. Say, am I goin' ter sit near you?"

Alex laughed outright and answered, "Why, yes; I guess so, if you want to."

"Well, I do, kid; 'cause I know you'll gimme all I want to eat. I'm awful hungry, after smell-in' them good things."

By this time they had reached the dining-room door, where they were met by Sister Kate, who pushed open the swinging-door to let them pass. One of the other nurses was hurrying down the hall, wheeling before her a chair in which sat a bright-eyed, black-haired little girl of only nine summers. In her lap was a copy of "Robinson Crusoe,"—and she held the volume tenderly, for it

seemed to remind her of her own crude life spent on one of the Pacific Islands.

Then came the sound of crutches—and a small boy, with small eyes and very high cheek-bones, entered, and stood in silent wonderment, gazing at the beautiful table of good things.

“Aha!” laughed Mr. Goodwin, taking his place at the head of the table, “It seems to me, Dr. Hamilton, that Miss Alden is going to be kept pretty lively for about an hour, with all these little folks to see to.”

The old doctor rubbed his hands together and tried to scowl over his spectacles, but succeeded only in puckering his lips into a smile, for the scent of the turkey, jellies and cream, together with many other good things, made the old man's heart as glad as if he had been a boy.

Everybody was happy, and everybody ate as if he enjoyed it. Johnny was in his element, with Alex on one side and Maggie on the other, and dear, good Sister Kate running about trying to keep all the plates full and the little mouths busy.

Maggie was very happy over her bouquet of dainty forget-me-nots, while Johnny cared not for his flowers, but gave them a glance or two, and then went on eating his turkey as if his life depended on it. Every one enjoyed a good laugh at him; for he managed, between bites and chews,

to say some funny thing, and every now and then he would burst out with, "Oh! don't I wish Nick was here. Poor old Nick!"

The little girl from the Islands was very shy, asking for what she wished in a quiet manner that touched Mr. Goodwin's heart. In fact, Mr. Goodwin did a great deal of quiet thinking that day, and struggled, once or twice, to keep back a tear that just *would* push itself out.

At last the dinner was over; and for once in his life Johnny sat back in his chair, perfectly contented, viewing the remains of the feast, and remarking in a serious manner to the assembled company, "Jimminy! I hope I don't bust!"



CHAPTER VII.

GRANDMA GOODWIN felt really grieved that she was to lose Alex so soon; but Mr. Goodwin thought it best to take his little son back to New York. So, on a bright, sunny morning, early in September, they all assembled at the station, Mr. Goodwin and Alex to board the train, grandma and Harry to say farewell. They were hardly seated in the waiting-room, when the sound of hurried footsteps reached their ears, and who should enter the doorway but Johnny Wells.

"Say, I didn't want yer to think yer wuz forgot by nobuddy, kid; so I jes' come along to see yer off, an' say mebbe I'll turn up in New York some day, an' I wanter know where you live."

Alex could hardly suppress a smile, for the thought of entertaining in his city home any one who occupied so low a position as Johnny had never entered his mind. But he put out his hand kindly, and said,

"Thank you, Johnny; you're awful good to come down here this morning. But how did you get away from the Florence?"

"Oh, nobody was lookin'; so I jes' skipped—see? I knew the way here all right."

"Well, well, my boy," said Mr. Goodwin, "I think you'd better run back as fast as you can. Alex will write you a letter as soon as he reaches New York, and tell you all the nice things he saw on the way, if you like. Now come, Alex, the train is going to start."

So, taking his son by the hand, Mr. Goodwin found his way to the train, and after bidding his mother a tender farewell, he and Alex soon disappeared inside the car.

Alex did a great deal of thinking on the way home, and when Mr. Goodwin questioned him, answered:

"Why, papa, I was thinking of the same thing I told you about one day at the Florence. Guess what it is."

"Oh, you were thinking about going to Europe with me, some time next year, when I have to go on business."

"No; guess again, papa. I never thought of going to Europe. What made you say that?"

"Well, you were greatly interested in the little pocket-maps and souvenirs I brought you, and you talked about them at the hospital."

"But it wasn't that, papa; it was something better than that."

"Oh, I know! It was Jackson B; that's what it was—Jackson B!"

"No," said Alex, laughing, and caressing his father's hand; "I think about Jackson B all the time. But this was something really extra, papa, that I think of only once in a while."

"Well, what was it? Now, come, tell me. Don't keep poor papa worrying over it so."

"No, sir; you must guess."

"Oh, dear me! Now, Allie boy, you are too hard on your poor old father. Well, it was Johnny Wells."

"There, that's better; only it wasn't all about him. I was thinking about a children's home, and how Johnny would be a good one to have in it. Don't you think so?"

"Why, my son, don't you think Johnny is happy blacking boots in Chicago?"

"Well, he seems very proud of his 'biz,' as he calls it; but papa, do you think such a little boy as he ought to be blacking boots on a street corner, and never going to school? You wouldn't let me do it, would you, papa?"

"You do it?" said Mr. Goodwin, drawing the child close and pressing a kiss on his forehead. "Whatever put that into your head? Don't you know I love you too dearly to let you do anything for years to come?" And again Mr. Goodwin caressed the child, more fervently than before, thinking how nearly he had been to losing

his little son, and saying, "Alex, dearest, you know you are all I have now."

"Yes, I know it, papa dear; and because I am, won't you please let me do one thing I wish this year?"

"A hundred things you wish, my son."

"Well, papa, you told me once that when I got to be a big man, twenty-one years old, I should have a lot all my own in New York. Now, if it's to be mine some day, I'd rather have it used for something good until I'm a man, and then I can buy a lot of my own."

"My dear child, what do you mean?" said Mr. Goodwin.

"Well, I'd like to build a home for boys—like Plumfield. You know about Plumfield and Aunt Jo in 'Little Men,' don't you, papa?"

"Plumfield? 'Little Men'? Why, it sounds familiar. What was it, my son? Was it a hospital?"

"Oh, no; it was a jolly home for boys—Aunt Jo was an awful kind lady, and Mr. Bhaer a funny German. He was Aunt Jo's husband, and they were so kind to poor boys. I wish you would build a home like that on my lot, papa. Wouldn't that be grand! Then poor Johnny could go there and live, and he could study and never black boots any more. Won't you please, papa?"

Now, if you had asked Mr. Goodwin to donate a check of a thousand dollars to the church, he wouldn't have been at all surprised. But to have such a plan as this thrust upon him—and that by a mere child—it almost took his breath away.

But all this time the train was whizzing along, and almost before they knew it, they were in New York.

* * * * *

It was only three days after this that little Johnny Wells received a letter from Alex, and as it was rather a newsy one, I will give you a copy of it here :

NEW YORK CITY, Sept. 11, 189-.

DEAR JOHNNY :—Jackson B was very glad to see me when I got home. He rubed his nose on my cote-sleeve, and made a grate fuss when I left him. Our house is getting fixed up inside, so I can't go in my room, but have to rite hear'in papa's studdy. New York is fine. I go to ride in the Park. How are all the children in Maplewud? Do you play games enny more? My papa is going to bild a home for children. Hoppeing to here from you soon,

Your friend,

ALEX GOODWIN.

When Miss Alden handed the letter to Johnny she suspected it was from Alex, and she also felt that she would have to read it to Johnny, as he knew nothing of reading and writing. But as soon as it became a part of that young man's

possessions, he betook himself to the farthest corner of the garden, and puzzled over it for half an hour in vain. Finally, his brain whirling with big letters, little letters, commas and periods, he swallowed his pride and marched into the house to find some one who would read it to him. Miss Alden obliged him, and was herself pleased to know that Alex and his father reached home in safety.

So the days and weeks rolled on, but Johnny did not return to his "biz." The lady who had taken an interest in him, and was at that time paying for him, had discovered that Johnny was too bright a boy to be deprived of an education, and she quickly determined that he should be placed in some good home, where he could have a schooling. It was just at this time that Alex's letter arrived; and, as the lady had spoken to Johnny often of her intentions regarding him, he exclaimed :

"Oh, I know the game! That kid yer uster see here—well, he went to New York, and he says his dad's goin' ter make er home for boys an' girls. Why can't I go there an' learn? That'd be great!"

CHAPTER VIII.

IT is a sunny day in early June. A large company of people is assembled under the friendly shade of trees scattered over a gentle slope of land. A band of musicians is discoursing popular airs, the music being caught up by the breeze and carried away over hill and dale, only to echo back the sweet notes of the strains. Everybody seems happy. Some are chatting gayly together, some are sipping lemonade at little tables scattered about on the grass, while still others are pondering over a set of maps and drawings laid upon a table near the band-stand. There are loads of bricks, and much granite, mortar, etc., scattered about. The foundation for a large building is almost completed, and above part of it a platform has been erected. There have been several short speeches, one or two songs, and now the gentlemen on the platform are hurriedly talking together, while one of them takes a small boy by the hand and leads him forward. At this a cheer goes up from the crowd, and the people move nearer the platform. Foremost in the crowd, we notice the smiling face of Grandma Goodwin. Sister Kate is here, also.

And, bless my eyes! if there isn't Johnny Wells!

The little boy on the platform now steps forward and bows. We hear the ladies whisper, "Doesn't he look sweet in that velvet suit?" It is Alex,— and this is what he says:

"Dear friends, we are so glad to see you here to-day. I am much obliged to you for coming way out here to-day, and I hope you all like the plans of this building. I am so happy because papa is building it on my land, as I asked him to do it a long time ago. Please tell people what this building is for, and when you hear of any little boy or girl who has no place to live, just send them here to the Goodwin Home."



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